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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT,
THURSDAY, MARCH 25, 2004

THIS REPORT WILL PRESENT A TURKISH PRESS SUMMARY UNDER
THREE THEMES:

HEADLINES
BRIEFING
EDITORIAL OPINION

HEADLINES

MASS APPEALS

Greek Cypriots find pretext to block talks - Turkiye
Denktas: Ankara weakened my hand in Cyprus talks - Milliyet
PM Erdogan signals he may cancel Israel visit - Hurriyet
Rantissi vows bloodshed - Turkiye
Rumsfeld praises Turkey's fight against terror - Turkiye
Britain's Straw: Turkey a litmus test for EU - Sabah
Bush team sweat before 9/11 commission - Milliyet

OPINION MAKERS

First day in Switzerland a fiasco - Radikal
Crisis in Switzerland - Cumhuriyet
Israel on domestic and worldwide alert - Cumhuriyet
Sheikh Yasin's successor Rantissi the new target - Zaman
Rantissi: Target is Israel, not the US - Cumhuriyet
PM Erdogan: Israel's attitude has ruined Middle East - Yeni
Safak
Hundreds of Iraqi Shiites march for Yasin - Yeni Safak
Clinton, Bush reject claims of 9/11 negligence - Zaman

BRIEFING

Cyprus: The UN, under pressure from the Greeks, has gone back on its commitment to hold four-party talks. The decision was announced by DeSoto on Wednesday in Switzerland. DeSoto said that four-way meetings were not necessary, and opted instead for a UN-led shuttle diplomacy. The Turkish delegation is not happy with Greek efforts to undermine the four-party talks and move discussions to the bilateral format. Furthermore, the Greek Cypriots objected to meeting with 'TRNC' leaders Mehmet Ali Talat and Serdar Denktas, saying they were not authorized to make decisions on behalf of the Turkish Cypriots. Dailies criticize the Greek Cypriots for attempting to block the peace negotiations. Karamanlis and Erdogan are expected in Burgenstock on March 28 and 29 respectively. Turkish Cypriot leader Denktas strongly criticized the Greek Cypriots and accused them of playing for time. Meanwhile, EU enlargement chief Verheugen promised the Greek Cypriots that a Cyprus integration deal would not be accepted as primary law within the European Union, according to 'Cumhuriyet.' Verheugen assured Greek Cypriot FM Iacovou on Tuesday that the derogations demanded by the Turks would not be permanently included in a Cyprus agreement. Denktas said the Greek Cypriots were using the EU to gain control over the whole island. He also criticized Ankara for 'weakening the hand' of Turkish Cypriot negotiators during the earlier talks in New York and Nicosia. Papers report that US Special Cyprus Coordinator Thomas Weston and some British diplomats would also attend the four-party conference.

PM Erdogan, FM Gul may cancel visits to Israel: "Hurriyet" claims that PM Erdogan and FM Gul might cancel prospective visits to Israel because of the killing of Hamas leader Sheikh Yassin by Israeli forces. Erdogan criticized the killing as 'an act of terror.' The Prime Minister said that 'nothing remains' of the US-sponsored roadmap for Middle East peace, and added that the killing of Yassin crushed Turkey's hopes for serving as a mediator in peace efforts between Israel and Palestine.

Turk sues US police for torture under detention: "Radikal" reports on the alleged mistreatment of Ismail Hakki Avci (42), a US resident Turkish citizen who was taken into police custody for drunk driving on Long Island in 1991. Avci said he was heavily beaten and chained by several policemen at the Long Island police station on April 11, 1991. After being hospitalized with a broken leg, Avci said he was tried on the spot without legal counsel, and received 23 days in jail for beating the police. He sued the police for torturing him, and received \$60,000 in reparations. Avci later opened the 'Al-Haq Turkish Food Store' in 2001. When his business began to deteriorate after September 11, the FBI took Avci to 26 Federal Plaza in Manhattan for interrogation. He was questioned over possible ties with Al-Qaida, Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, and was asked his opinion of Israel before being taken to a prison in New Jersey. Avci claims he was stripped naked, beaten put in chains, and placed in a small cell where he spent 23 days. He was later released and extradited to Istanbul. Avci applied to human rights organizations in Turkey, and was given a medical report confirming a psychological disorder caused by torture. He has filed a lawsuit against US authorities, "Radikal" reports.

EDITORIAL OPINION:

Yassin Assassination/Campaign Against Terrorism/GME Initiative

"The Gates of Hell"

Soli Ozel commented in the mass appeal Sabah (3/25): "There is no longer any way that a Palestinian pro-peace movement can be successful. There is even a strong possibility that Arafat and the Hizbullah leadership will be assassinated. The Palestinian authority has effectively collapsed. Under current circumstances, it is likely that more Palestinians will leave their homeland, and those who remain will suffer from the lack of leadership. . The worst part is that there is almost no power in Israel that can stop the insanity. Israeli peace advocates have lost their voice completely following the rise in terrorism against civilians and due to Arafat's biased position. The US, on the other hand, is acting very irresponsibly by staying out of the Israel-Palestine issue until the US presidential elections are over. It is unbelievable that Bush continues to support Sharon, and even depicts him as a man of peace. With this kind of policy, the US will find it impossible to bring order to the Middle East."

"Israel conducts a state terror"

Bugra Baskurt noted in the nationalist Ortadogu (3/25): "The world remains silent while Israel baldy conducts an act of terrorism and carries out a genocide against Palestinians. It seems that Israel's long-term goal is to eliminate Palestinians completely, despite the fact that the Palestinians happen to be the genuine owner of the land occupied by the Israeli state. . The rulers of the developed world owe us an answer to this question: How can we possibly label the Palestinian people as terrorists when they are standing against Israeli aggression and the state of Israel kills a spiritual leader. . If the world is not capable of calling this act 'state terrorism,' then we should sit down and redefine the basic concepts."

"Sheik Yassin"

Yilmaz Altug observed in the conservative Turkiye (3/25): "Sharon's past record helps us understand his mentality. He was not only responsible for massacres in two Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, he also did his best to sabotage PM Barak's conciliatory moves with the Palestinians. Sharon always pursued a provocative stance toward the Palestinians, including an attack against the Mescid-al Aksa. With constant support from the US, Sharon left all Israeli promises about a settlement with the Palestinians unmet. The assassination of Sheik Yassin will only help to aggravate the Palestinian dispute. The war will unfortunately intensify and cost the blood of innocent thousands."

"Greater Middle East Chaos"

Zeynep Atikkan commented in the sensational-mass appeal Aksam: "I wonder if the blowing up of any possible peace process in the region was considered in the US scenario for a Greater Middle East initiative? Sharon and his supporters were well aware of the impact of the assassination of Yassin. You cannot launch a terrorist attack using the excuse that you are doing it to fight against terrorism. How can democracy and stability in the Middle East be discussed under these conditions? It is not possible to convince the Islamic world that Israel carried out the assassination without the knowledge of the US. In other

words, there is a lack of trust in the country that proposes the GME. In the absence of such trust, the project is destined to be shelved. Unfortunately, Turkey became a model for a project which will never get off the ground."

EDELMAN